

Kontsevich and Witten Receive 2008 Crafoord Prize in Mathematics

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences has announced the recipients of the Crafoord Prize in Mathematics and Astronomy 2008.

The mathematics portion of the prize is awarded jointly to MAXIM KONTSEVICH, Institut des Hautes Études Scientifiques, Bures-sur-Yvette, France, and EDWARD WITTEN, Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton, NJ. The two were cited “for their important contributions to mathematics inspired by modern theoretical physics”.

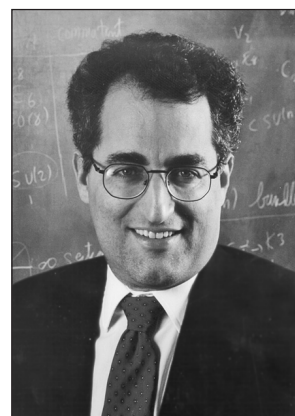
The laureates in mathematics have used the methodology of physics to develop a revolutionary new mathematics intended for the study of various types of geometrical objects. Their work is not only of great interest in the discipline of mathematics but may also find applications in totally different areas. Its results are of considerable value for physics and research into the fundamental laws of nature. According to string theory, which is an ambitious attempt to formulate a theory for all the natural forces, the smallest particles of which the universe is composed are vibrating strings. This theory predicts the existence of additional dimensions and requires very advanced mathematics. The laureates have resolved several important mathematical problems related to string theory and have in this way paved the way for its further development.

Maxim Kontsevich was born in 1964 in Khimki, Russia. He received his Ph.D. in mathematics in 1992 at the University of Bonn. He is a professor at the Institut des Hautes Études Scientifiques. He received the Fields Medal in 1998.

Edward Witten was born in 1951 in Baltimore, MD. He received his Ph.D. in physics in 1976 from Princeton University. He is the Charles Simonyi Professor in the School of Natural Sciences at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. He received the Fields Medal in 1990.



Maxim Kontsevich



Edward Witten

The amount of this year’s Crafoord Prize is US\$500,000. Kontsevich and Witten are awarded one half, and the other half is awarded to Rashid Sunyaev, an astrophysicist who is receiving the astronomy prize. The prize-awarding ceremony will take place at the Academy in Stockholm on April 23, 2008, in the presence of His Majesty the King.

The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, founded in 1739, is an independent organization whose overall objective is to promote the sciences and strengthen their influence in society. Traditionally, the Academy takes special responsibility for the natural sciences and mathematics.

*—From a news release of the Royal Swedish
Academy of Sciences*